

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wolf Administration, United Way of Southwestern PA Announce New App to Help Students with Disabilities Find Jobs That Pay

Pittsburgh, PA – Today, Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) Executive Director for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) David DeNotaris with United Way of Southwestern PA's Director of Programs for Seniors & People with Disabilities Heather Sedlacko, announced the launch of the new 'PA Planning for the Future Checklist' app to help students with disabilities transition from high school to employment and find jobs that pay.

The new and innovative app supports Pennsylvania students with disabilities as they prepare for employment, continuing education and further inclusion into the community. The 'PA Planning for the Future Checklist' app, available for free on both iOS and Android, consists of various steps and tips to prepare students with disabilities from age 14-21 for adulthood. Each stage of the checklist lists fundamental activities that should be reviewed to help reach goals after high school, including continuing education or employment.

"This new app prepares students for their future in either post-secondary education or employment, offering them access to information, education and training resources, and eventually, success in a job that pays," said DeNotaris. "Pennsylvania saw 13,187 individuals with a disability enter the workforce in the last year – the largest of any state in the nation."

"We are proud of this achievement, but we must continue our efforts to provide students with disabilities the opportunities to seek further education and meaningful employment," DeNotaris added.

DeNotaris and Sedlacko spoke to students with disabilities during an Early Reach training session at the Pittsburgh OVR District Office. Early Reach is an initiative spearheaded by OVR that targets information and outreach to individual students with disabilities and their families to ensure they are aware of vocational rehabilitation services, eligibility, and preparation for transition as early as possible. The new app was also demonstrated to the students during the training session, and will be incorporated into future Early Reach training sessions in Pennsylvania schools.

The app was created in Pittsburgh through a partnership between OVR, United Way's 21 and Able initiative, the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education.

"This app makes the checklist easily accessible to people with disabilities across the state who are preparing to enter the workforce to ensure critical conversations about the future are occurring at the right time," said Sedlacko. "United Way strives to help people with disabilities reach their employment goals and find competitive jobs. It is our hope this app will help more Pennsylvanians find success."

The app can be downloaded here: <https://uwsdpa.org/download-pa-planning-for-the-future-checklist>.

United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, serving Allegheny, Westmoreland, Fayette and Southern Armstrong counties, leads and mobilizes the caring power of individuals, the business community and organizations to help local people in need measurably improve their lives. United Way creates long-lasting change for the betterment of our community.

The Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation provides vocational rehabilitation services to help persons with disabilities prepare for, obtain, or maintain employment. In 2016, OVR helped place 8,438 OVR customers into employment, and connected with 6,000 Pennsylvania employers to achieve hiring results. Early Reach services held a total of 2,673 events and reached more than 18,000 students and youth.

Additional information is available on the L&I website at www.dli.pa.gov or by following us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

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